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Negro Attitudes Toward Pictures for Junior High School Social Studies Textbooks.

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Three hundred and twenty-six Detroit-area Negro parents belonging to parent-teacher organizations were used to determine attitudes toward pictures of Negro personalities and events which might be included in junior high school social studies texts. Fifty-five captioned slides, divided into periods of slavery, emancipation, and twentieth century, were shown. Parents rated these as favorable or unfavorable. Results of Chi-square, t-test, and analysis of variance procedures showed that 78 percent of the illustrations were approved by a majority of the respondents, and none were disapproved by a majority. Most favored pictures were of Martin Luther King, Booker T. Washington, Frederick Douglass, Joe Louis, and W.E.B. DuBois. Least favorable were depictions of Malcolm X, slave labor, and children playing in a city slum. Certain factors in the backgrounds of the respondents had significant bearing on attitudes toward the pictures. Males reacted more favorably than females; those of higher occupational or educational levels, more favorably than those of lower levels; and members of community organizations, more favorably than those with little participation. (MD)

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NEGRO ATTITUDES TOWARD PICTURES FOR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
SOCIAL STUDIES TEXTBOOKS

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of the American Educational Research Association
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Preface

A trend seems to have taken form in recent years toward discontent with a number of social studies textbooks used in urban-area schools.

Many large-city and state boards of education have expressed dissatisfaction with textbook content relevant to the depiction of the American Negro. As the result, supplementary materials have been devised and issued in an attempt to alleviate some of the perceived deficiencies. Policy statements regarding the treatment of minority groups have been adopted and implemented. Moreover, textbook publishers have been notified accordingly and urged to provide materials considered suitable for large-city usage.

An examination of research conducted during the past three decades in the area of minority treatment in textbooks tends to lend credence to these concerns regarding the portrayal of the Negro in American history. Numerous studies have cited omissions and misrepresentations in both written content and in illustration.

Further investigation in the area of attitude rating scales indicated that despite the availability of methods for the measurement of attitudes, they have not been usefully employed to obtain the attitudes of black Americans who comprise the nation's largest minority group.

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In view of these observations, this study attempted the development and utilization of a method to obtain the attitudes of one segment of the black population regarding the selection of illustrations for school textbooks.

Purpose of the Study

More precisely, the purpose of this investigation was to determine the attitudes of Negro members of parent-teacher organizations toward pictures of Negro personalities and events which might be included in junior high school social studies textbooks. The study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What attitudes are held by the selected population regarding the pictures presented?
2. Can groups with similar preferences be determined and described in terms of: (a) sex, (b) age, (c) home stability, (d) number of children in the family attending school, (e) occupation, (f) education, and (g) community-participation factors?
3. What is the relationship of the background factors of the respondents and the responses to the pictures grouped into three historical periods: slavery, emancipation, and twentieth century?

General Plan of the Investigation

The general plan of the investigation involved four basic phases:

1. The creation of the research instrument.
2. The selection of the respondents.
3. The viewing of the illustrations by the respondents and the recording of their attitudes toward them.
4. The analysis of the data in order to seek answers to the questions previously raised.

Procedures

Captioned illustrations were selected to comprise the research instrument in the belief that this medium possessed a contextual quality, elicited attitudes readily, and minimized the reading-ability factor.

Although pictures have been used in the past as projective devices in studies of the personality, the purpose of the employment of the instrument in the present study was undisguised and, therefore, differed from those purposes generally associated with projective techniques.

Thus, approximately three hundred pictures depicting Negro historical figures and events of the past three centuries were accumulated from various publicational media.

Through a systematized procedure of reduction, 80 captioned illustrations were selected and classified into three historical periods: slavery, emancipation, and twentieth century. Slides were made from the pictures and submitted to a judging phase for further reduction to 65 pictures which comprised the experimental instrument. It may be noted that no attempt was made by this investigator or the five judges employed to classify the pictures as "favorable" or "unfavorable." Aside from considerations of numerical feasibility, the reductive functions were geared toward the selection of those illustrations which were most adaptable to previously-formulated selective criteria.

The surviving pictures were then utilized in a pilot-study for ultimate refinement and formulation of the 55-picture research instrument used in this investigation.

The population for this study consisted of Detroit-area Negro parents in attendance at regularly-scheduled parent-teacher organization meetings of elementary and junior high schools. The sample, totaling 326 respondents,

was selected from representative areas of the black community. It provided a diversity of occupational, socio-economic, and demographic factors through a selection of school patron organizations situated in diversified areas of a large city, an enveloped small city, and two suburbs.

The respondents viewed each picture which was projected upon a screen in chronological sequence, and they recorded their attitudes on a five-point scale ranging from "strongly approve" to "strongly disapprove." Frequency, mean, and standard deviation computations were made for the responses to each picture, to each historical picture-group, and for the composite responses to all pictures. Chi-square, t-test, and analysis of variance procedures were employed to determine significant differences among the background factors of the respondents and their responses to the pictures.

Findings

It was found that 78 per cent of the illustrations were approved by a majority of the respondents. None of the pictures was disapproved or regarded "in doubt" by a majority. The five pictures judged most favorably were those of Martin Luther King, Booker T. Washington, Frederick Douglass, Joe Louis, and W.E.B. DuBois. Those judged least favorably were depictions of Malcolm X, a slave-labor cartoon, children playing in a city slum, slaves picking plantation cotton, and steamboat stokers shoveling coal.

Significant differences in response at the .01 level were found among the respondents' background factors of: (1) sex, (2) occupation, and (3) degree of community participation, and of education at the .05 level of confidence. It was found that:

1. Males generally reacted more favorably to the pictures than did the females.

2. The degree of pictorial approval was in proportion to the occupational level of the respondents.

3. The pictures were most favorably received by members of community organizations, somewhat less favorably by community leaders, and least favorably by members with a minimum of community participation.

4. Respondents possessing at least one year of college education reacted more favorably to the pictures than did those with less education.

There were no significant differences in response among the factors of: (1) age, (2) home stability, and (3) number of children in the family attending school.

Conclusions

The respondents were most receptive to the pictures depicting eminent individuals who enhanced the Negro image rather than to those which portrayed the hardships and privations endured by the race during the past or present.

The illustrations of the twentieth century period were most favorably received, whereas those of the slavery era were received least favorably.

Certain factors in the backgrounds of the respondents had a significant bearing on attitudes toward the composite pictures and also toward those classified in historical groups.

Implications

In the attempt to obtain the attitudes of a segment of the nation's black population regarding textbook content, a penetration has been made into what may be considered an uncharted area. Since there has been little precedence for an investigation of this nature, the method used as well as

its purposes bore some characteristics of uniqueness.

The implication of this study is that additional and perhaps more sophisticated attempts to determine the attitudes of Negroes concerning textbook content should be conducted in order that more useful guidelines may be made available to those who have a vested responsibility to provide American youth with an accurate and adequate history of their nation.